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INFO RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 8249  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 1093  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0391  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0828  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4242  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TBILISI 001729

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/16/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: QUAD DEMARCHE ON GEORGIAN SHIP SEIZURES  
DELIVERED

REF: A. STATE 94922 (NOTAL)  
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 2360

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. KENT LOGSDON. REASONS: 1.4 (B)  
AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) As requested, Charge joined the German, French and UK Ambassadors in a September 16 meeting to deliver the points contained ref a to Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze. The Quad group reviewed the points and stressed that the decision to deliver this demarche jointly was intended to demonstrate to Georgia the seriousness of our concerns about the recent seizures of ships by Georgian authorities off the coast of Abkhazia.

[1](#)2. (C) FM Vashadze responded that this had been a difficult issue for Georgia and that the ship seized most recently, the Buket, had made more than five illegal trips to Sukhumi prior to its seizure. According to Vashadze, the Georgians had repeatedly warned the Turks about this illegal trade and had protested that the Turkish Customs authorities were continuing to stamp "destination: Sukhumi, Republic of Abkhazia or Sukhumi, Russian Federation" on cargo bills of lading intended for Abkhazia. He said that in past years, Turkish ships -- usually flying under other flags, primarily from Panama and Cambodia -- had been seized and/or stopped, and the Turks had repeatedly asked for Georgia to allow the ships and crews to go free and they had always agreed. The Georgians had consistently asked for Turkish support in stopping these commercial vessels from violating Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, but with no results.

[1](#)3. (C) The FM said that the seizure of the Buket and the 24-year imprisonment sentence for the ship's captain had gotten the Turkish Government's attention. "Desra" -- the Turkish supplier of oil and petrol for Abkhazia -- had already stopped its supply operations. Vashadze acknowledged that the Georgians would have to be extremely careful in proceeding in this kind of way, but in his view, "the Turks had gotten the message." The Turkish Government was now ready to sit down in a bilateral working group with the Georgians to discuss the modalities and paperwork involved in visiting Abkhaz ports. According to Vashadze, if the Turkish ships were willing to stop in Poti and Batumi and be "registered" (embassy note: unclear whether this meant paperwork or customs payments or both), then they would be cleared for travel to Sukhumi. Otherwise, this kind of trade would not be tolerated. FM Vashadze said that he planned to visit Ankara in October or November for further discussions.

[1](#)4. (C) In Vashadze's view, the Russian Government is looking for a pretext to complain about Georgian actions. However, he was confident that Russian ships would not be affected and would continue to enter Abkhaz ports, without

hindrance, from the north. In fact, Vashadze said, Georgia preferred that Abkhazia import its fuel from Turkey rather than it being supplied by Russia; it just needed to be done in accordance with Georgian law. As he had mentioned in an earlier meeting with the Ambassador, Vashadze emphasized that Georgia had no intention of engaging in direct conflict with a Russian vessel.

LOGSDON